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UNCLAS SANAA 000892

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: YEMENI ELECTION DAY PEACEFUL WITH HIGH TURNOUT

1. (U) Summary: Yemen enjoyed an overwhelmingly peaceful election day on April 27. Early results indicate that the GPC will maintain its parliamentary majority, with opposition parties increasing their seats. Voter turnout was very high, estimated to be at least 70%. Election administration appeared professional and well-organized despite some irregularities. The only official international delegation, organized by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), will issue its preliminary assessment on April 29. End Summary.

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Early Results Show Opposition Narrowing the Gap  
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2. (U) While results are still coming in from most constituencies 18 hours after the close of polls, preliminary results from 20% of constituencies show the ruling General People's Congress (GPC) leading but members of the opposition Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) running close. Several traditional GPC strongholds in Sanaa, for example, have seen well-known GPC candidates lose to the Islah party. Analysts say that Islah did well at least in part because of a strong women's vote. However, the GPC is expected to maintain a clear majority. Individual constituency results will be announced by the election commission as they come in and final results for all 301 constituencies will be announced by the April 30 deadline. One ROYG official estimated that a new government would be announced within two weeks.

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Mostly Peaceful; High Turnout  
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3. (U) Sporadic violence marred the elections in some areas, including Taiz, Amran, Dhamar and Hajira. According to reliable sources, approximately 14 persons were injured in clashes, primarily between the GPC and Islah. Uncorroborated reports say that between one to three persons were killed. At least one clash was clearly between rival tribes and unrelated directly to the election. With almost 30 people killed in Yemen's last elections in 2001 for local councils, however, in comparison these elections were overwhelmingly peaceful on election day. Possible reasons for the lack of violence include the strong messages sent by the President, the election commission, political parties and others for non-violence and a "weapons free day," fewer candidates vying for election and a strong security presence.

4. (U) The opening of polls saw huge crowds waiting outside to vote, with Embassy observers reporting palpable enthusiasm and eagerness on the part of voters. By midday, Embassy observers were reporting between 50-65% of voters had already cast their vote. By the close of polls, domestic and international observers were estimating at least a 70% turnout. High numbers of women voters were in evidence, with some commissions reporting 80% turnout.

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Professional Administration;  
Fairly Smooth Voting with Some Irregularities  
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5. (U) Embassy observers, who received a warm welcome at voting centers in Sanaa, Aden and Hadramaut, were impressed at the professionalism of the election commissions, noting that a vast majority were well-organized and smoothly run. Observers reported that irregularities inside polling centers appeared to be a result of poor training or knowledge rather than organized fraud. One commissioner told an Embassy observer, "it may not be perfect but we are getting better." During the lengthy counting process, observers witnessed painstakingly careful procedures to ensure its integrity, with political party, NGO and international observers as witnesses. Some technical irregularities reported by observers include commissioners possibly influencing votes in women's commissions in the course of explaining how to vote, ballots in a few constituencies that contained faint markings (likely a result of a printing error) that could influence voters and some commissions that failed to use the photographic voter lists to verify voter identity.

6. (U) Accusations by opposition parties of campaign irregularities include vote-buying, politicking too close to polls, interference by the GPC at some voting centers and use of official media for partisan purposes.

17. (U) The National Democratic Institute (NDI) fielded a 30-member international delegation and organized between 6-10,000 non-partisan domestic NGO observers. NDI will issue a preliminary statement assessing the election on April 29.  
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